



February 21st, 2023

Re: Black and Brown United in Action testimony in support of SB 991

Dear Senator Herron, Senator Lesser, Representative Gilchrest, Representative Dathan and members of the Human Services Committee:

We are Black and Brown United In Action, a grassroots organization which focuses on immigrant rights, worker's rights, women's rights, and all matters which adversely affect the lives of Black and Brown people in New Haven, Connecticut and are testifying in support of SB 991, An Act Concerning Medicaid Reimbursement for Community Health Workers.

The struggle is real. We are experiencing a significant shortage of healthcare workers. The roles and activities of community health workers (CHWs) are tailored to meet the unique needs of the communities they serve. CHWs may perform the following tasks: create connections between vulnerable populations and healthcare providers, help patients navigate healthcare and social service systems, manage care and care transitions for vulnerable populations, reduce social isolation among patients, determine eligibility and enroll individuals in health insurance plans, ensure cultural competence among healthcare providers serving vulnerable populations, educate healthcare providers and stakeholders about community health needs provide culturally appropriate health education on topics related to chronic disease prevention, physical activity, and nutrition, advocate for underserved individuals or communities to receive services and resources to address health needs, collect data and relay information to stakeholders to inform programs and policies, provide informal counseling, health screenings, and referrals, build community capacity to address health issues, address social determinants of health.

In addition to these generally assigned tasks, community health workers are recognized in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act as important members of the healthcare workforce. Evidence shows that CHWs can help improve health care access and outcomes; strengthen health care teams; and enhance quality of life for people in poor, underserved, and diverse communities. CHWs fill an important role in the health and social services sector. CHWs serve as a point of contact for people who don't have access to quality medical care or social services because of poverty, language barriers, or cultural divides. CHWs bridge those gaps and connect people with the services they need. The work of a CHW can have a direct positive effect on many lives. CHWs have a very important role, which is why medicaid reimbursement for CHWs is critical. Additionally, given the continually increasing inflation rate, this reimbursement must be enough to employ a CHW at a livable wage, cover billing, training and supervisory costs and must include the community and CHWs to ensure representation and a clear understanding of needs through all stages of implementation.

In closing, as you listen to the testimonies being shared, we urge you to consider the viability of democracy when someone who does not speak English as a first language or needs communication support services such as sign language is only afforded 3 mins to share their testimony. Kindly acknowledge that access to healthcare includes being able to effectively and efficiently share thought, which will prove difficult if there is a lack of resources and time, both of which can feel like a cage to someone who is only trying to share their story. We appreciate the time, effort and courage which you put into your work to represent us, and are asking for you to consider how improving language and time access will increase our participation and support of your

endeavors of improving our communities during the legislative process.

Sincerely,

Black and Brown United in Action